



“As long as we wish for
safety, we will have
difficulty pursuing what
matters”

Peter Block



Building Community – Changing the Conversation

Based on the Peter Block book “Community”

“Questions are more transforming than Answers”

- Skill is getting the questions right
- Traditionally: We explain, study, analyze, define, express the desire to change others. Interesting...but not powerful
- Questions open door to future – and demand engagement

Changing the Conversation:

- Gifts
- Ownership
- Dissent
- Commitment

Gifts: Bringing gifts of those on the margin into the center

- Focusing on the *gifts* of others, vs. deficiencies or needs
- Defining ourselves, our kids, our community by our gifts/what is present, not by what is missing
- A gift is not a gift until it is offered

The Gifts Conversation

- What is the gift you still hold in exile?
- What gratitude do you hold that has gone unexpressed?
- What have others in this room done, in this Change Team, that has touched you?

The Ownership Conversation

- What are you creating that exists in the world?
- Distinction: Ownership v. Blame

The Ownership Conversation

- What have I done to contribute to the very thing I complain about or want to change?
- What is the story about this initiative/our kids/community, that you hear yourself most often telling?
- Are there payoffs you receive from holding on to this story?

The Dissent Conversation

- Dissent conversation creates an opening for commitment
- When dissent is expressed, just listen. Don't solve it, defend against it, or explain anything
- Primary distinction: Dissent & lip service
 - Secondary: Dissent vs. Denial, rebellion, or resignation

Dissent Questions

- What doubts or reservations do you have?
- What have you said “yes” to that you no longer mean?
- What is a commitment or decision that you have changed your mind about?
- What resentment do you hold that no one knows about?

The Commitment Conversation

This conversation is a PROMISE with no expectation of RETURN

The commitments that count the most are ones made to peers, other citizens.

We need to support those on our team who say that there is no promise they are willing to make at this time. That this will not cost us our membership or seat at the table. We only lose our seat when we do not honor our word.

Commitment embraces 2 kinds of promises:

1. My behavior and actions with others
2. Results and outcomes that will occur in the world

The Commitment Conversation

- What promises am I willing to make?
- What is the cost to others for me to keep my commitments, or to fail in my commitments?
- What is the promise I'm willing to make that constitutes a risk or major shift for me?